

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2020

The Honorable K. Jane Williams
Acting Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Acting Administrator Williams:

As you know, Congress appropriated \$25 billion in emergency funding in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to ensure Americans—including frontline health care workers, law enforcement, first responders, and other safety personnel—do not lose access to reliable transit during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to ensure frontline transit workers have access to personal protective equipment (PPE). We appreciate the work of you and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) staff in adhering to the very tight timeline we provided to get this immediate financial relief to transit agencies across the nation. We write to request further assistance in ensuring transit agencies receive federal support in acquiring PPE and in updating your guidance to transit agencies to ensure more robust safety protections are put in place for frontline workers.

In the brief time since Congress passed this historic funding, we have already seen the tragic death of frontline transit workers as a result of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Jason Hargrove, a bus driver in Detroit succumbed to the virus after sharing with the world his experience of a passenger who refused to cover his mouth while coughing on the bus. In New York, more than a dozen transit worker deaths have been attributed to COVID-19, and nationally estimates are more than 25 transit workers have died as a result of COVID-19.

The Guidance FTA issued last Thursday, noted that FTA did not recommend the use of PPE at that time. Since then, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued guidance recommending members of the public cover their face with cloth when in public. We believe FTA should explicitly update its guidance and proactively provide support to help transit agencies acquire PPE and provide it to their workers. Further, we urge FTA to work with transit agencies to ensure:

- buses, trains, streetcars, and worker facilities, including crew rooms are regularly disinfected;
- rear-door boarding to maintain a safe distance between riders and transit operators, where feasible;
- that safety precautions are taken to protect transit workers from touching the same digital screen, keyboard, or fingerprint-scanning device, e.g. for timekeeping purposes;
- transit riders are encouraged to cover their faces with makeshift protective implements such as bandanas or scarves while riding public transit and that riders observe proper social distancing; and
- brave front line workers are afforded death benefits.

Thank you for your timely attention to this.

Sincerely,

Gary C. Peters /s/
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand /s/
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey /s/
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr. /s/
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin /s/
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal /s/
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Robert Menendez /s/
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders /s/
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Cory Booker /s/
Cory Booker
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin /s/
Ben Cardin
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono /s/
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris /s/
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren /s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan /s/
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar /s/
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell /s/
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer /s/
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet /s/
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen /s/
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin /s/
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen /s/
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security